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## CHAPTER III.

MISHNA A. Aqabia b. Mahalallel used to say: "Consider three things, and thou wilt not fall into transgression: know whence thou comest, whither thou art going, and before whom thou art about to give account and reckoning; know whence thou comest--from a fetid drop, and whither thou art going--to worm and maggot; and before whom thou art about to give account and reckoning: before the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He."

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

1"Said Aqabia b. Mahalallel, whoever takes to his heart the following four things will never sin": Whence he comes; whither he goes; what will become of him; and who is his judge. Whence he comes? from a dark place! Whither he goes? to a dark place! What will become of him? dust and worms! And who is his judge? the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He!

Said R. Simeon: He comes from a dark place and returns thither; he springs from a fetid drop, from a place which no eye can behold, and finally becomes dust and worms, as it is written [Job, xxv. 6]: "How much less the mortal, the mere worm? and the son of earth, the mere maggot?"

Said R. Elazar b. Jacob: He is a worm while living, and a maggot when dead. What is meant by "a worm while living"? the vermin that infest him; "and a maggot when dead" applies to those that are bred from him after his death.

Said R. Simeon b. Elazar: To what can this be compared? To a king who built a magnificent palace, in which he dwelt, and a tanner's ditch passed in front of its entrance. Whoever

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passed by said: "How beautiful and how glorious this palace would have been, if this tanner's ditch had not passed in front of its entrances." So is man. If now, when from his entrails issues forth a rancid stream, he is so proud and haughty, had a stream of sweet-smelling water or oil issued from him, how much the more proud and haughty would he have been.

When R. Eliezer fell ill, his disciples came to visit him. They sat before him and said: "Our master, teach us the best of all the things you taught us." He said: "Be careful of your friend's honor; and when you pray, know before whom you are standing, and through this you will be rewarded with life in the world to come."

MISHNA B. R. Haninah, the Segan of the high-priest, said: "Pray always for the welfare of the government; were it not for the fear of it, men would swallow each other alive." R. Haninah b.

Phradyon said: "Two that sit together and do not discuss any portion of the Law, their sitting is considered that of scorners, as it is written [Ps. i. 1]: 'And sitteth not in the seat of scorners'; but two that sit together and are discussing some words of the Law have the Shekhina among them, as it is written [Mal. iii. 16]: 'Then conversed they that feared the Lord one with the other; and the Lord listened and heard it,' etc."

This is as to two. Whence is it deduced of even one who occupies himself with the study of the Law, that the Holy One, blessed be He, fixes his reward? It is written [Sam. iii. 28]: "That he sit in solitude and be silent; because He hath laid it upon him."

*Tosephta--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

1Said R. Hananiah the Segan: Whoever takes the words of the Torah to his heart, all thoughts of the sword and hunger, of foolishness and fornication, evil thoughts in general and thoughts of adultery, thoughts of nonsense and thoughts of human cares, are destroyed for him, for so it is written in David's Psalms

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[paragraph continues] [xix. 9]: "The precepts of the Lord are upright, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes. P, But one that does not take to heart the words of the Torah, to him the reverse comes, as Moses wrote in his Deuteronomy [xxviii. 46-48]: "And they shall remain on thee for a sign and for a token, and on thy seed for ever. For the reason that thou didst not serve the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, while there was an abundance of all things; therefore, shalt thou serve thy enemies whom the Lord will send out against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of everything."

Since it says: "In hunger," what is meant by it? At the time when one has not even a piece of barley-bread, his enemies demand of him wheat bread and fat meat. And what is meant by the words: "And in thirst"? At the time when one has not even a drop of vinegar, or beer, his enemies demand of him the best wine of the land. And what is meant by the words: "And in nakedness"? When one has not even a woollen or linen shirt, his enemies demand of him silken ones, the best of all lands. The words, "And in want of everything," mean that he will be without a light, knife, and table. Others says: Without vinegar and salt. This corresponds with the manner in which people curse when they say: "May there be no vinegar nor salt in thy house!"

He used to say the words: "Look not so at me, because I am somewhat black, because the sun hath looked fiercely at me" [Song of Songs, i. 6], refer to the counsellors of Judah, who relieved themselves of the yoke of the Holy One, blessed be He, and chose a human king to reign over them.

"My mother's children were angry with me" [ibid.] refers to Moses, who slew the Egyptian, as it is written [Ex. ii. 11, 12]: "And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown up, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdensome labors. . . . And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no one by." What is meant by "and when he saw that there was no one by"? Infer from this, that Moses inquired of the deliberating groups of angels, whether he should slay him (the Egyptian). They told him. to do so, and he did it, not

with a sword, but by a word, as it is written [ibid., ibid. 14]: "Sayest (intendest) thou to kill me, as thou hast killed the Egyptian?" From this can be learned that he killed him by the Holy Name.

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Others say that the passage: "My mother's children were angry with me," refers to Moses, who fled to Midian, as it is written [Ex. ii. 15-17]: "And Pharaoh heard this thing, and he sought to slay Moses; but Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and tarried in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well. . . . And the shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses arose and helped them and watered their flocks." Moses constituted himself as judge, and said: "It is usual for the males to draw the water and for the females to water the flocks, and here I see the reverse. There is in this place much perversion."

There are others who say that as long as Moses stood by the well, the water surged and came toward him, but when he left, the water also receded. At the same time, he said: "Woe to me, that I have left my people and come to dwell among heathens."

Another explanation of the above passage is, that it refers to the Israelites who made the golden calf, for although at first they said [Ex. xxiv. 7]: "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do and obey," nevertheless they soon afterward exclaimed: "These are thy gods, O Israel" [Ex. xxxii. 4].

Still others say that the above passage refers to the spies who brought and spread an evil report about the land, and caused that carcasses of Israelites fell in the desert, as it is written [Numb. xiv. 29]: "In this wilderness shall your carcasses fall."

"They appointed me to be keeper of the vineyards" [Song of Songs, i. 6]. Said the Holy One, blessed be He: Who has caused me to shower kindness upon the heathens, but Israel himself? For when the heathens live in prosperity they are pushed, cursed, and persecuted.

Others say that the above passage refers to the Israelites who were exiled in Babylon, and the prophets who were then among them told them to observe the laws of offerings and tithes. They, however, answered: "We were exiled because we refused to observe those laws, and you wish us to observe them now?"

MISHNA C. R. Simeon said Three that have eaten at our table, and have not blessed the Lord for His kindness, are as if they have eaten of the sacrifices of the dead, as it is written [Is. xxviii. 8]: 'For all tables are full of

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vomit of filthiness, there is no place (clean).' But three that have blessed the Lord when eating at our table, are as if they had eaten of the table of the Omnipotent, as it is written [Ezek. xli. 22]: And he spoke unto me: This is the table that is before the Lord.'"

MISHNA D. R. Hanina b. 'Hakhinai used to say: "He who awakens by night, and he who is walking alone on the road and turns aside his heart to idleness, it is his own fault if he incurs trouble for himself."

MISHNA E. R. Nehunia b. Haqanah said: "Whoso receives upon him the yoke of the Law (*i.e.*, one who devotes himself wholly to study), the community removes from him the yoke of the government and the yoke of worldly cares; but a student who breaks from him the yoke of the Law, the community lays upon him the yoke of the government and the yoke of worldly cares."

MISHNA F. R. Halaphtha of the village of Hananiah said: "When ten sit and are occupied in words of Law the Shekhina is among them, as it is written [Ps. lxxxii. 1]: 'God standeth in the *Congregation* of God.' And whence is it proved of even five? It is written [Amos, ix. 6]: 'And hath founded his *bundle* 1 on the earth' (and a bundle is at least of five). And whence even three? It is written [Ps. lxxxii. 1]: 'In the midst of judges doth he judge' (and the number of judges is generally three). And whence even two? It is written [Mal. iii. 16]: 'Then they that favored the Lord spake often one to another.' (The least number of persons who can speak to each other is two.) And whence even one? It is written [Ex. xx. 24 (21)]: 'In every place where I shall permit my name to be mentioned, I will come unto *thee* and will bless *thee*.'"

MISHNA G. R. Eliezer of Bartota said: "Render unto God what belongs to Him, for thou and all thou hast are His, as David said [I Chron. xxix. 14]: 'For all things come from thee, and of thine own have we given thee.'"

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MISHNA H. R. Jacob said: "One who walks by the way and learns, and breaks off his study and says, 'How beautiful is this tree!' and, 'How fine is this furrow field!' is endangering his own life."

MISHNA I. R. Dosithai b. R. Janai said in the name of R. Meir: "When a scholar of the sages sits and studies, and subsequently forgets what he studied, Scripture likens him to one who endangers his own life, as it is written [Deut. iv. 9]: 'Only take heed to thyself, and guard thy soul, diligently, that thou do not forget the things which thy eyes have seen and that they depart not from thy heart all the days of thy life,' etc. It might be thought that he is culpable of forgetting even when his study had grown hard to him, therefore it is written [Deut. iv. 19]: 'And they depart not from thy heart all the days of thy life,' from which it is to be inferred that he is not guilty unless he intentionally leads such a life as to forget them."

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

1R. Hanina b. Dosa said: Whomsoever fear of sin precedes, his wisdom prevails, as it is written [Ps. cxi. 10]: The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord."

"*He also used to say: 'Whosoever deeds exceed,'*" etc., as it is written [Ex. xxiv.]: "We will do and obey." It was asked of R. Johanan b. Zakkai: "What praise is to be applied to one who is wise and sin-fearing? He answered: "A mechanic who has his tools with him." And what praise is to be applied to the one who is only wise, but not sin-fearing?" And he answered: "He is a mechanic who has no tools." He was asked again as to what praise is to be applied to the one who is sin-fearing but lacks wisdom, and he answered: "No mechanic but has tools."

"*R. Elazar b. Azariah said: 'If there is no Law,'*" etc. He used to say: One who is possessed of

good deeds and who has studied much law, to what is he to be compared? unto a tree that is planted by waters, whose branches; are few but whose roots are many, and which can withstand the severest storm, as

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it is written [Ps. i. 3]: "And he shall be like a tree planted by rivulets of water," etc. One who lacks good deeds but who has studied law, to what is he to be compared? to a tree planted in the desert whose branches are many and his roots few, which is easily uprooted by any wind, as it is written [Jer. xvii. 6]: "He shall be like a lonely tree in the desert."

"R. Gamaliel said: 'Set a teacher,'" etc. A teacher for wisdom and a companion to study with, and be quit of doubt and do not tithe much by estimation.

Simeon his son used to say: All my days I spent among the sages, and I found silence to be the most advisable thing, and that not discussion but practice is the principal thing; and if silence is advisable for intelligent persons, so much the more for fools. Wisdom does not bring to much talk, nor does much talk bring to wisdom; the main thing is practice. Whosoever talks much causes sin, as it is written [Prov. x. 19]: "In a multitude of words transgression cannot be avoided"; and it is also written [ibid. xvii. 28]: "Even a fool, when he keepeth silence, is counted wise." R. Simeon b. Eliezer said: "He who studies the law and is sin-fearing is like a physician who is consulted about a wound and who has his instruments and drugs with him; but one who studies the Law and is not sin-fearing is like a physician who, when consulted about a wound, has the instruments to operate with but has no drugs to heal the wound up."

MISHNA J. R. Hanina b. Dosa said: "He in whom fear of sin precedes his wisdom, (may be sure that) his wisdom will endure; and he in whom wisdom precedes his fear of sin, (may be sure that) his wisdom will not endure."

He also used to say: "He whose works are in excess of his wisdom, (it is certain that) his wisdom will endure; and he whose wisdom is in excess of his works, (it is certain that) his wisdom will not endure."

He also said: "He who has earned man's esteem and love, will also receive the favor of Heaven; but he who is not worthy of such esteem, cannot expect to find favor with God."

MISHNA K. R. Dosa b. Horkhinas said: "Sleeping away the morning, carousing at noonday, childish trifling,

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and the company of the vulgar waste a man's life away.

MISHNA L. R. Elazar the Modai said: "He that profanes things sacred and contemns the festivals; he who causes his neighbor to blush in public, and annuls the covenant of Abraham our father, and acts barefacedly against the Torah, 1 even though he is possessed of Torah and good deeds, he has no share in the world to come."

MISHNA H. R. Ishmael said: "Be pliant with thy chief (although he is not deserving) and yielding to the impressment, 2 and receive every man with cheerfulness."

MISHNA N. R. Aqiba said: "Mockery and frivolity are the forerunners of immorality. Tradition is the rampart about the Law; tithes (charity) are the rampart of wealth; good resolutions are the preservative of abstinence; and the safeguard of wisdom is--silence."

MISHNA O. He used to say: "Beloved is man, that he was created in His image, and, moreover, that he was notified that he was so created, as it is written [Gen. ix. 6]: 'For in the image of God made he man.'"

MISHNA P. "Beloved are Israel, that they are called children of God; moreover, that it was made known to them that they are so called, as it is written [Deut. xiv. 1]: 'Ye are the children of the Lord your God.'"

MISHNA Q. "Beloved are Israel, that there was given to them a precious article; moreover, that it was made known to them that there was given to them the precious article" [as it is stated elsewhere that with this the world was created, as it is written [Prov. iv. 2]: "For good information do I give you; my teaching must ye not forsake"].

MISHNA R. "Everything is foreseen and free-will is given. And the world is judged by grace; and every one

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is judged according to the majority of his deeds" (*i.e.*, if one has done more good than evil, he is judged more favorably--Rashi).

MISHNA S. He (Aqiba) used to say: "All that we possess is merely a trust, and over all life a net is spread out. The storehouse is open, the proprietor sells on credit; the ledger lies ready and the purchaser's hand makes the entry; whoever wishes may come and borrow, but the collectors are continually going the rounds of the debtors, and obtain payment from them voluntarily or involuntarily; they know whereupon they base their claims, and their court is a tribunal of justice, and everything is prepared for the banquet" (*i.e.*, even the wicked have a share in the world to come--Rashi).

MISHNA T. R. Elazar b. Azariah was wont to say: "Without knowledge of religion there can be no true culture, and without true culture there is no knowledge of religion. Where there is no wisdom, there is no fear of God; and without fear of God there is no wisdom. Without learning there can be no counsel, and without counsel there will be lack of learning. Where there is a dearth of bread, culture cannot thrive, and lack of culture causes dearth of bread."

MISHNA U. He also used to say: "With what is he to be compared, who can boast of more learning than charitable deeds? With a tree of many branches and but few roots--there comes a storm that uproots and prostrates it, as it is written [Jer. xvii. 6]: 'And he shall be like a lonely tree in the desert, which feeleth not when the good cometh; but abideth in the parched places in the wilderness, in a salty land which cannot be inhabited. 'But what does he resemble, who can

show more deeds than learning? A tree of few branches and many roots: all the storms, and winds may bear down and rage upon it, they cannot move it from its place. As it is written [Jer. xvii. 8]: 'And he shall be like a tree that is planted by the waters, and by a stream spreadeth out its roots, which

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feebleth not when heat cometh, but its leaf remaineth green, and in a year of drought it is undisturbed by care, and ceaseth not from yielding fruit."

MISHNA V. R. Elazar b. 'Hasma said: "'Qinim' [1](#) and 'Pitteche Niddah' [2](#) are essentials of Torah; canons of astronomy and geometry are after-courses of wisdom."

*Tosephtha--Aboth of R. Nathan.*

[3](#)"*Sleeping away the morning.*" It means: One shall not wilfully sleep till past the hour of reading the Shema, for by so doing he neglects the Law, as it is written [Prov. xxvi. 13]: "As a door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed. The slothful saith, There is a leopard in the way: a lion is between the streets."

"*Carousing at noonday*" means: One should not make a practice of drinking wine at midday, for by so doing he is prevented from observing the Law, as it is written [Eccl. x. 16]: "Woe to thee, O land! when thy king is low-minded, and when thy princes eat in the morning." Also: "Happy art thou, O land, when thy king is noble-spirited, and thy princes eat in proper time." When is the proper time? Say, then, in the world to come, as it is written [Is. ix. 22]: "I the Lord will hasten it in its time"; also: "At the proper time shall it be said to Jacob and to Israel," etc. [Numb. xxiii. 23]. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to Balaam: "*At the time, but not in the time; not in your time, but at the time when I will redeem Israel.*"

"*Childish trifling.*" By this is meant, that one should not make a practice of talking to his wife, sons, or daughters when he is studying at home; for by so doing he neglects the Torah, as it is written [Josh. i. 8]: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein, day and night."

"*The company of the vulgar*" means: One should not lounge with idlers in the market, lest he neglect the Torah, as it is written [Ps. i. 1, 2]: "Happy is the man who walketh not in the

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counsel of the wicked . . . and sitteth not in the way of scorners; but whose delight is the law of the Lord." Said R. Meir: For what purpose is it said: "And sitteth not in the way of scorners"? Say, then, it refers to the assembly halls of the scoffers, as it is written [ibid. xxvi. 5]: "I have hated the assemblage of evil-doers; and with the wicked will I not sit"; and it is also written [Mal. iii. 19]: "For, behold, the day is coming, which shall burn as an oven, and all the presumptuous, yea, and all who practise wickedness, shall be stubble"; and "presumptuous yea, are scoffers, as it is written [Prov. xxi. 24]: "The presumptuous and proud, scorners are his name."

Once it happened that R. Aqiba, while sitting and teaching his disciples, was reminded of the way he spent his younger days. He said: "I thank thee, Lord my God, that thou hast placed me among the studious, and not among the idlers in the markets."

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## Footnotes

[71:1](#) Chapter XIX. of the original. The phraseology of these sentences is a little different in the Mishna.

[72:1](#) Chapter XX. of the original.

[75:1](#) Leeser translates it "vault," but the Talmud translates it literally.

[76:1](#) Chapter XXII. of the original.

[73:1](#) This is according to Maimonides; Rashi, however, says it means: one who says that Moses wrote in the Pentateuch ridiculous things, as, for instance, that Thimna was the concubine of Eliphaz [Gen. xxxvi. 12].

[73:2](#) Maimonides explains it otherwise.

[80:1](#) The young doves sacrificed by a woman after confinement.

[80:2](#) The three kinds of blood of menses, which are difficult to be distinguished from each other.

[80:3](#) Chapter XXI. of the original.

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